FELLOWSHIP IN
PRAYER

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Healing Prayer

Since 1949 the purpose of Fellowship in Prayer is to promote the practice of prayer among all religious faiths whose fundamental belief is in God regardless of race, creed, or color, and whose tenets include the universal attributes of truth, honesty, justice, and mercy, that thereby there may arise a closer relation to Almighty God and a deeper spirit of fellowship among mankind.

And, behold, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed: and Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy: Son, be of good cheer: thy sins be forgiven thee.

And, behold, certain of the scribes said within themselves, this man blasphemeth.

And Jesus knowing their thoughts said. Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts?

For whether it is easier to say Thy sins be forgiven thee: or to say, Arise and walk.

But that ye may know the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (Then saith he to the sick of palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house.

And he arose, and departed to his house.

Matthew 9: 2-7. *King James Version*

The opinions expressed in this issue are the authors' and/or subjects' and not necessarily those of the editors or of Fellowship in Prayer.

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Healing

Introduction

W. Paul Jones, Protestant theologian, asked himself if he were not, despite being an ordained minister, "a functional atheist." The thought shocked his conscience, and yet he had to admit that it was true. In all his years of theorizing about God, he never experienced His presence. His difficulty was resolved when he sought the presence of God through a three-month retreat in a Trappist monastery. On his way to the monastery he asked himself, "Once and for all, will it be vacuous emptiness, or filling wholeness? . . . And if I find nothing . . . am I prepared to risk all?"

The modern, with his scientific worldview and technical facility still, for the most part, speaks of God. He goes to church, prays, and even devotes his time to good-works projects sponsored by his faith. Yet, like W. Paul Jones, we moderns function in our day-to-day lives as atheists. Our reliance is more likely to be placed in the hands of an expert than in the hands of God. Few today see God as a living, present entity with a real involvement in human affairs. The God we worship is the God of the past — a God who acted during Biblical times but not today. In many ways our modern understanding of deity reflects the attitude of Nietzsche's Zarathustra. "God is dead" is the unexpressed but probably most believed sentiment of our times.

The modern mind looks for natural explanations of what were once considered miracles of God. Natural science has increasingly pushed theology out

Prayer

of nature, leaving little for God to do in this world. Miracles, the direct intervention of God in the lives of people, are either explained away by science or not believed. The only people with direct contact with God are the mentally infirm, who hear voices and see signs. Direct contact with God is viewed by the modern as insanity.

At the close of the nineteenth century William James, philosopher and psychologist, delivered his Gifford Lectures on religious experience to an audience of scholars at the University of Edinburgh, Scotland. These lectures became the core of a book, *Varieties of Religious Experience.* The lectures were delivered at a time when science was at its most aggressive in terms of advocacy of a materialistic worldview. James the pragmatist, collected and classified hundreds of personal encounters with the divine. His goal was a psychology of religious experience. James was not a theologian. He was a scientist.

After collecting the mass of personal accounts, he realized the beneficial nature of these felt encounters with a higher power. People's lives were really changed. People were healed physically, mentally, and even morally. If judged by the fruits, these experiences produced what we would call miracles. To James, encounters with the divine passed the pragmatic acid test — they worked. They worked in situations where other things did not. Rather than try to explain the phenomenon away, James left it as he found it. Religion devoid of its theoretical concepts, its creeds, and its rituals points to something that can be realized in the human experience.

Like James, I can do no better than let this series of interviews speak for themselves. In the experience of those healed through their prayers to God we

see something working — something that changes lives. We see miracles. They may have natural explanations, but if they do, I don't know what those explanations are, and I don't intend to try to figure them out. What I saw and heard were people who were not functional atheists. They were people of faith in a God that existed in Biblical times and still exists today.

Prayer, in all its forms, implies a contact with something divine. The functional atheist doesn't know if prayer is practical. He seems to be able to live his life without it. Moderns and particularly Americans look for practicality in their activities. James didn't comment on the truth or falsity of religious experience. He was impressed with the results. But those who experienced the contact — those who got results — were impressed with a lot more than the results. They were impressed with the extent of God's love.

Paul, in Corinthians I, wrote of all the spiritual gifts that could be conferred on a person by the Holy Spirit. "The greatest of these is love," he said. And love came through in these interviews. Mrs. Capelli's love for her daughter was made stronger when she became involved in the Charismatic Renewal in the Catholic Church. Her prayers had not only the practical effect of helping to heal her daughter Patty, who survived a tragic car accident, but they have given her a stronger faith and a renewed understanding of her religion.

At the Capital Assembly of God, during a service, tears of joy come to the eyes of the parishioners as they sing praises to their Lord Jesus Christ. It is this love that Mr. Gosnell felt and took with him that fateful day when he almost died from a heart attack. It was the prayers and genuine concern for him that he credits for the divine intercession that saved his life.

As I conducted these interviews I knew that I wasn't speaking to functional atheists. The faith of these people alluded to a living God. When I asked Mrs. Wagenseil if Christian Science could heal a disease such as leprosy, she had no doubts. She said, "Jesus healed leprosy . . . . Don't we have the same God he did?" Her reply is a challenge to Zarathustra's assertion, "God is dead." It is a quiet challenge though — a challenge based on seeing many healings. A faith that is assured and calm.

The two alcoholics interviewed, like a passage from *The Twelve Steps* of Alcoholics Anonymous, came to believe that a power greater than themselves could restore them to sanity. Besides the practical occurrence of their no longer drinking, they are living a life based on helping others and are trying to, in their way, give back to God what he freely gave to them. The end result has been joy.

With the exception of the interviews with the members of Alcoholics Anonymous, these interviews deal with three Christian approaches to healing through prayer. This is not to imply that Jewish prayer, Hindu prayer, or any other kind of prayer does not heal. I chose Christians, because they were the most readily available at the time, and because of the practice by Jesus of healing the sick. Without exception the people interviewed were both warm and open. To me they demonstrated a practical power derived from prayer — the power to heal the sick.

" . . . renewal in the Catholic church is viewed by participants as a return to the spirit of early christianity."

Catholic Healers

There are a growing number of Roman Catholics who are now attending what has become known as Charismatic Masses. Some of these Masses are just like the regular Roman Catholic Mass, with a little more emphasis on praise and lay participation. Others rise to an emotional pitch, and speaking in tongues can break out in the congregation. This is all part of the Charismatic Renewal. This Renewal in the Catholic Church is viewed by participants as a return to the spirit of early Christianity.

Healing, a gift of the Holy Spirit, is now being practiced by a number of Roman Catholic priests involved in the Renewal. Usually this is done by the priest laying on hands while the rest of the congregation prays over the person in need of being healed. There are now special healing Masses where this is regularly done after the liturgy.

Catholics involved in the Renewal believe their faith and understanding of the Gospel and the liturgy are heightened by their participation in this new form of Catholic expression. Ann Capelli, a Charismatic Catholic, says, "The Renewal is just that. My faith has been renewed. I now understand the liturgy in a way I never have, and I can see its beauty."

**"There were Protestants, Catholics, and Jewish people praying for her.
Every faith you can think of prayed for her."**

Patty's Story

Ann Capelli's life was thrown into turmoil when her daughter Patty got into a near fatal accident two years ago. Since Patty's accident, she has experienced signs which tell her that Patty will someday be totally healed. As a result of the tragic accident, Mrs. Capelli became involved in the Charismatic Renewal. Since then this closely knit Italian-American family has experienced several miracles.

FIP: Please tell me about your daughter.

MRS. CAPELLI: Patty was always a person who knew just what she wanted to do with her life. Since she was a little girl, she wanted to be a nurse. She's twenty-one years now. She graduated high school in 1980. Then she went to Atlantic County Vocational School for her LPN. Her thoughts were that she would finish Atlantic County Vocational School in one year and then go for her RN.

The day she had her accident she was riding with this other girl who also was a student. I used to ask her why she rode to school with someone when she had her own car. Patty would say, "Gas is too expensive, Mom. It's better this way." So she drove to school with this woman whose children were in school and who decided that she wanted to do something with her life. That day one of her children was sick and she was rushing to get home from nursing school. That's when the accident occurred.

When Patty didn't get home on time, I knew something was wrong. You see Patty was like clockwork. She'd come in that door, put her books down, and she'd say, "Hi." Then she'd say, "I have to wash the smoke out of my hair." She couldn't stand the odor of smoke, so she would take a shower. Then she would say, "Put a pot of coffee on." So when I saw that she was late, I said, "Oh God, where's Patty?" Something inside told me there was something wrong, but I didn't want to believe it. So I said a prayer that I normally would say when I was upset. I started to pray right away.

I called her boyfriend's house and there was no answer. He had gone to pick up his brother. All at once the doorbell rang and the phone — all at the same time. I looked up and I could see the policeman's head at the door. I picked up the phone and it was my son-in-law. He said, "Mom, you better get over to the hospital. Maria went out of here like a mad woman. The police stopped her and said it was a terrible accident." At first he said that he wasn't sure if it was Patty or the woman driving, but he then said, "I think it's Patty."

I opened the door to let the policeman in, and he said, "Mrs. Capelli, let me take you to the hospital. Your daughter Patty has been in a terrible accident."

I said, "I'll take myself." I was thinking that I have to get home to cook supper. He kept insisting that he would take me. This started my other daughter, Joanne, to get very upset. She wanted to come with me. I said, "You stay here to tell Daddy that I'm at the hospital." I tried to calm her down.

Finally I said to the policeman, "OK, you better take me." I walked out the door and I asked him, "Was it bad?"

He said, "Yes."

As I was asking, I was praying. I was praying out loud. I didn't care who heard me. I just kept praying. About the third time that I asked him if it was bad, he said, "Her head was crushed." It wasn't so. Or if it was so, God saw otherwise.

When I got to the hospital, it was a madhouse. People were rushing in all directions. I was hyper, yet I was mentally calm. And everybody was trying to pull at me to sit me down. I was thinking to myself, "Why, what are you, whacky? That's my kid in there."

I wanted to see her and they said, "You can't see her, the doctor's working on her. Please Mrs. Capelli, it's very serious." I kept thinking she had a crushed head, and there's no chance.

I got hold of myself. The state trooper came in. I asked him if Patty was driving. He said, "No, your child was not driving. It was the other girl."

I asked, "How is she?"

He said, "She's not coherent, but she's OK."

She had a long gash. I wanted to talk to her. They wouldn't let me. I saw her go by on a stretcher, and she was quite excitable and talking loud. She had a very badly injured ankle. When I saw her, I was satisfied that she would be all right. So, then I concentrated on Patty. I prayed all the while I was there. I prayed constantly.

FIP: Did you see her at that point?

MRS. CAPELLI: Oh no. We didn't see her 'til around midnight. When they finally said that I could go in to her, I stopped dead in my tracks. I said, "Oh God." I'm thinking of a very mangled child. And knowing what a beautiful daughter I had, I don't know how I got through that door. The Lord helped me. When I did see her, she looked perfect — just perfect.

She had some bruises in her hairline which weren't visible. At that point she was sedated, so she looked like she was sleeping. Then we were told they had to take her to Vineland for a CATscan with our permission.

I was constantly praying. People were coming from all directions. My kids all got there very quickly. Her friends from school came into the hospital to see her. You know it was quite a madhouse. But they were all concerned about her. I gave them permission. I am sorry at this point I did not get them to bring her to Philadelphia. My friends tried to tell me. The surgeon seemed so certain that everything was going to be over in a week, you know. I thought that since she was only going to be here a week, it would be more convenient, so I could let it ride.

I started a Novena to Saint Teresa. Saint Teresa has signs. You receive a rose. These roses were coming at me in all directions.

FIP: Who gives you the roses?

MRS. CAPELLI: Someone in the church gives them to you. They don't know you are making a Novena. I had a woman come in who knew Patty. She kept reaching through her things, saying, "I have something to give you. I have something to give you." Then she said, "I know what you're looking for." She then gave me a rose — a dried rose in plastic. She gave me that. Another friend came with a statue of Saint Teresa with roses on it. This all happened during the first four days that I was making the five-day Novena.

FIP: What's a Novena?

MRS. CAPELLI: Saying certain prayers to a certain saint. Most of them run nine days. This particular one runs five days. I continually kept it going and I continually kept getting the good signs. My faith just got stronger and stronger. I just knew she was going to get well.

We had a setback here in Hammonton one weekend, and I asked that she be taken out of there. The nurse recommended a doctor from Shore Memorial Hospital, so I went that way.

At Shore Memorial they were building, so the room was not as clean. She got a staph infection in her trachea. They had her on a rotating bed to keep her moving. They didn't realize that when they fed her through a feeding tube that they should stop the bed. So she was getting food in her lungs. She got pneumonia. And then through the catheter, through their own carelessness, she got the worst infection that you can get. To top this all off, she got a reaction from the drugs that she used to combat these infections.

She was isolated in a private room, on the fifth floor, which was very good and immaculately clean. The nurses let me freely walk in as often as I wished. Unfortunately, she had to give up that room when another doctor needed it.

She started to come around, but she also had to be operated on. Her thigh was fractured — shattered. She has a pin in there yet. Anyway, she was coming

out of the coma.

FIP: I didn't realize that she was in a coma.

MRS. CAPELLI: Oh yes.

FIP: Were others praying for her?

MRS. CAPELLI: All the way there was constant prayer, constant Novenas from many people. There were Protestants, Catholics, and Jewish people praying for her. Every faith that you can think of prayed for her.

FIP: Were these all friends?

MRS. CAPELLI: Friends, people in town that knew us, and just anybody. A prayer chain reached as far as Canada. It was all over, just spread out. I still receive mail from people who prayed for her. It's still going. I don't think it will stop, until Patty is Patty. And that is what Patty is going to be, Patty. There's no doubt in my mind.

FIP: That she will get completely well?

MRS. CAPELLI: Yes. She's going to get better. She's going to be Patty as I knew Patty.

FIP: What's wrong with her now?

MRS. CAPELLI: Patty speaks well. She's reading on an adult level. She doesn't have her balance back completely. All her coordination is not back. She cannot handle a pencil. Also, her short-term memory isn't very good yet.

FIP: Were there severe concussions involved?

MRS. CAPELLI: Yes. Anything that could of happened, happened to her. Her lung was pushed out of socket and collapsed. She had a fractured pelvic bone, a fractured collarbone, and she got ulcers from the medication: medication used to keep her brain from swelling out of proportion. So she hemorrhaged from that. She had a hairline fracture to the right side.

She now has complete movement of her whole body. Her coordination isn't back one hundred percent. She is now able to eat alone; not perfect. She can now handle the brush and brush her teeth. She can now understand everything. She can follow a television show. She laughs at the comic parts. Her personality has not changed. There were many miracles since she had the accident.

FIP: What were the miracles?

MRS. CAPELLI: The fact that she came through the accident alive was the first. Then she had this awful urinary tract infection which she couldn't get rid of. She had no control of her bowels and no control of her urinary tract. It was just diapers. This was really bad, and it caused an infection. So I took her to a healing Mass with Father Orsini.

FIP: Please tell me something about the healing Mass.

MRS. CAPELLI: At the healing Mass, all the healings that occur in the Bible are read as they were promised by our Lord Jesus Christ. Then we go through a process where they let you in-heal. This is to help you get rid of all your anguish and anger. These are things which can stop the Lord from healing you. You may not even be aware that you are holding something against someone else which can block the Lord's healing. You do have to get rid of all your hate and frustration so that God's love can enter.

After that, they continue with the Mass. They explain things that can happen in the Mass and read more of the Bible. The Mass also teaches you that the Holy Spirit dwells within us all. We have to be aware of that, so we can use it. The Mass goes on. It's a regular Mass. It's more beautiful than other Masses. Maybe because of the way you feel at that time.

After the Mass, the priest has a healing service. Father has prayed and fasted the day before. In that time, the Lord has shown him different types of healing that would take place that day. It could be vision. It could be for hearing. Anything. Cancer of the stomach, cancer of the bladder; all different types of cancer. And when he calls for these things, those people come up. Sometimes a few are healed, and sometimes they are all healed. Father Orsini seems to know when the Lord will heal someone from head to toe. You can just see him light up.

FIP: Has he called Patty up to be healed yet?

MRS. CAPELLI: He prays for Patty every time. And this particular time he had a healing of the urinary tract. He said, "It's right here. It's in the middle of the church."

Now people had told me that when you hear of a healing of something that troubles you, call it and claim it as your own. I called it and claimed it for Patty. She has had no infection since.

FIP: Did it go away that very day?

MRS. CAPELLI: It went right away. Within that week it was all gone. You see, I stood firm on it. She's since had diarrhea which is cause to have that infection back, but nothing. It hasn't come back and that was last year around March or April. I wrote Father Orsini a letter and I told him about it.

Patty has an eye problem. She can't focus — half of her vision is blurred. I believe that will come back completely, too.

You see, I firmly believe that God is going to make Patty, Patty.
She will say, "Mom, how do you know?"
I will say, "God told me."
Then she will say, "Well, what did he tell you?"
I will tell her that God said that Patty will be all well. I feel that Patty has to get rid of these frustrations too. That will come.

FIP: How did God tell you that Patty will get well?

MRS. CAPELLI: Well, I didn't hear a voice. God speaks to the inner mind. It comes as a strong feeling. It might come to me when in prayer, reading the Bible, or just when I'm sitting quietly.

Now the hardest part is sorting my own thoughts from God's thoughts. When you finally realize that God will do this for you, you turn it over to Him. I won't say that I have given Patty one hundred percent to God. I have been raised to know that the Lord gives you the child and she is in your care, and it's your duty to take care of her. I'm letting go now. Day by day, I'm giving Patty to God. As this happens the Lord's peace floods me with a warmth from head to toe which is so beautiful. I can't describe the feeling in words.

FIP: Are you part of the Charismatic Renewal in the Catholic Church?

MRS. CAPELLI: Yes. I hope it really catches on.

FIP: What does this Renewal involve?

MRS. CAPELLI: It's really what the Catholic Church was when it began. People are able to speak out and raise their hands in praise to the Lord.

I guess, at some point, someone in the Catholic Church decided that it was too noisy. They probably said, "Let's calm down." It kind of put a damper on it for a while. The Renewal is what the Catholic Church once had.

The Lord does want you to praise Him and thank Him. And when you ask Him for something, you should always thank Him before you even ask for it. This shows that you have faith.

FIP: What about the liturgy?

MRS. CAPELLI: That's there too. And it's beautiful.

You know, a lot of people say that Catholics don't read the Bible. That's not true. All the readings in Mass are from the Bible. Part of the Renewal teaches us Catholics what we already have. It's needed. I never realized what was in my Mass until I got into the Charismatic Renewal. It's so beautiful now.

FIP: I can see the results of your faith in Patty. She's come a long way.

MRS. CAPELLI: She's come a very long way, and in the process I have met so many beautiful people. I met a mother just recently. I take Patty into Pennsylvania for horseback-riding therapy. There I met this mother who has a twenty-seven-year-old daughter. Her accident will be four years in December. Patty's will be three. This young girl was married when she had the accident. Her husband couldn't take it. He left her. The mother now has her completely. She has not come as far as Patty, but she will. That mother is Catholic. She says this girl is going to get well. There's no doubts in her mind. These are the type of people I meet. They help strengthen my faith.

FIP: Do you ever question that Patty will get well?

MRS. CAPELLI: No. Sometimes a doctor or a therapist will say that I have to face reality. I just walk away. God is reality. I did this even before I became involved in the Renewal.

FIP: Is this how you became involved in the Renewal?

MRS. CAPELLI: I was interested in it before her accident. I wanted to go, but I never got there. When Patty was in Llords Rehab, a nurse said to me, "Mrs. Capelli, you have a statue of Saint Teresa. Do you pray to Saint Teresa?"

I said, "Yes, almost continuously."

She said, "Well, Sister Mary Ellen and I pray over Patty at night. Would you like to meet her?"

I said yes. That touched me. So I met this lovely nun who was also a nurse. I met her in a coffee shop. She was a skinny little woman. And here she was in jeans. I wasn't sure she was the nun. I sat and talked with her, and she talked to me quite a bit about how they were going back to laying hands on patients. She came up with me to Patty's room, and we all prayed over Patty. I knew somehow when she prayed over Patty that she knew Patty was going to be all right.

Once before this incident, I went to a healing Mass, and oh was I the doubting Thomas. I saw this priest who looked to me like Liberace. That time I didn't take to it. Anyway, I saw all these people being slayed in the Spirit, and I prayed that if it were real, make that priest pray over me for Patty. I had a picture of Patty in the palm of my hand. Now the church was full. I walked up to the front of the church. The priest called me over to him. I went up to him and he said, "What is it?" I was so upset I could hardly talk. Well he prayed over me and I went out in the Spirit.

FIP: What does that mean? Did you pass out?

MRS. CAPELLI: It's not like you're completely passed out. You hear people talking. You're not totally interested in what they are saying, but you can hear them.

I remember that one leg was up and one leg was down and I wanted to put the other leg down and I couldn't. I can remember wanting to get up because I could hear these voices. My eyes were fluttering but I couldn't open them. Finally I got up, and a lot of people hugged and kissed me. I couldn't understand it. I really couldn't understand it. Someone said, "Oh, you were set up for that."

I tried to believe it but I really couldn't believe it. Well it took me from then until the spring, three or four months, and I thought about it the whole time before I understood that it had to be of the Lord. It definitely had to be of the Lord. That's when I talked to this nurse who was also a nun, and who was in the Charismatic Renewal. I was drawn to it.

I was making Mass every morning at Saint Joseph's. I met quite a few people there. At the time I didn't know they were in the Renewal. I was invited to a special service. I went to my first Charismatic Mass. I really enjoyed it. I joined a prayer group, and the faith got stronger and stronger. There was a young fellow there, at Llords, a social worker, and he came up and said to me that they were going to keep her. His job was to tell me what the score was. I didn't want to hear it. Well anyway, this one day he came up to me and I said, "Jerry, I'm not worried about Patty. The man upstairs tells me she will be fine." He looked at me so shocked — implying that I was crazy. It didn't bother me. I had gotten past all this. I had gotten to where I knew God had taken over, and He doesn't go back on His promises, and He doesn't lie to us.

It's been a long road. I remember when they wanted me to take her home and I was scared — scared to death. But I wasn't thinking that here I was — taking care of her every day, anyway. I was at the hospital every day. I knew I could take care of her, but I just didn't have the faith that I could take care of her. It grew. I started to take her home all day Saturdays. When I got sure of myself there, I would take her for the whole weekend. I kept praying.

They found out that they were overdosing her with drugs. The drugs damaged her liver. She couldn't talk — her vocal chords were paralyzed. That's another miracle. In less than two weeks she was talking. So God's doing it in stages. That's what they teach in the Renewal. God will heal, but He will do it His way.

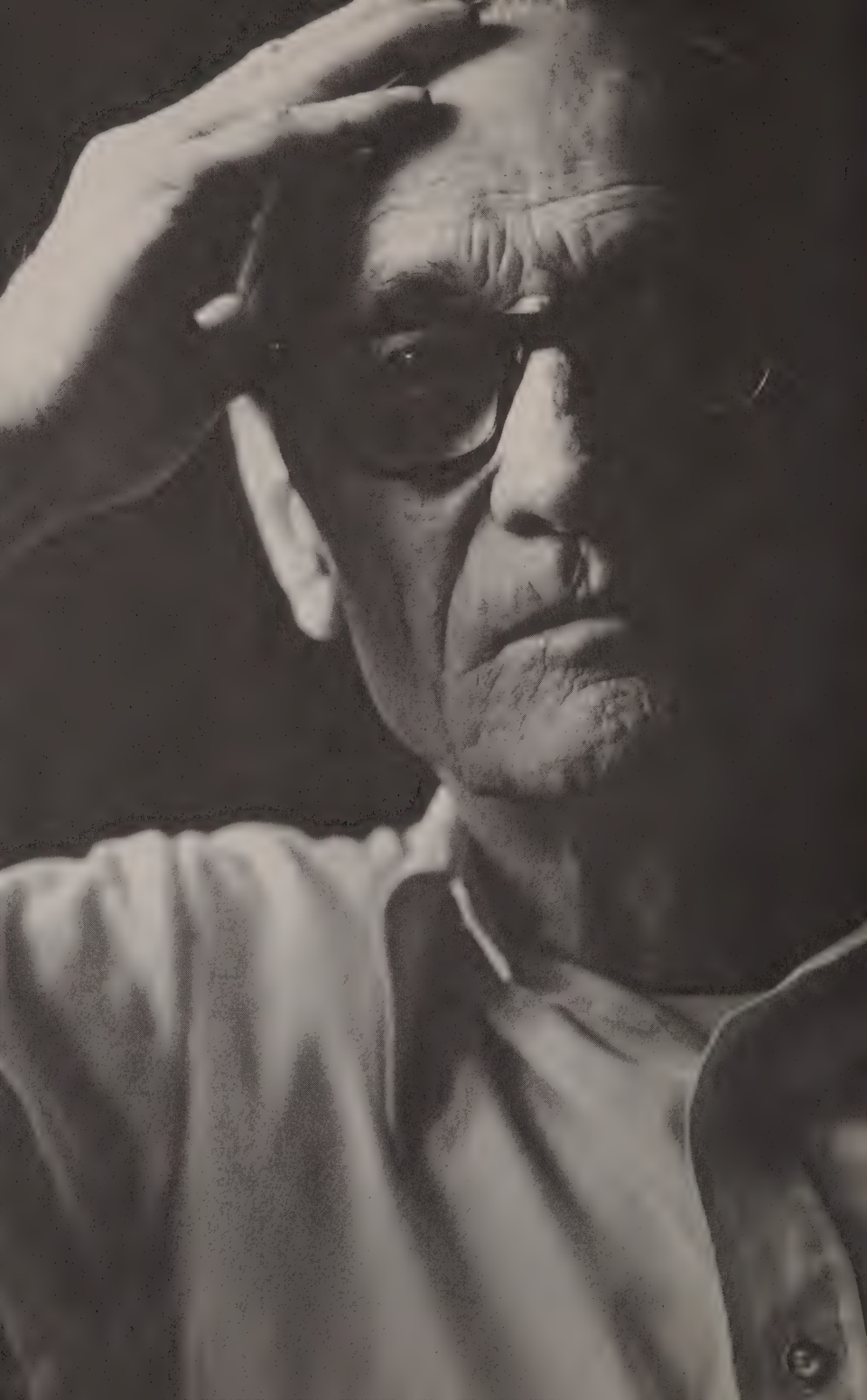
"People were weeping with tears of joy and praying in the spaces between the aisles."

Capital Assembly of God

I don't know what I expected to see when I drove up to the Capital Assembly of God. I didn't expect to see a quiet-looking, almost suburban brick structure. It seemed somehow too sedate for a Pentecostal church. I suppose the trim lawns and suburban setting represented for me the kind of place where stylish Christians met once a week to dress up, listen to a sermon, and socialize after the service. At first I was disappointed. I wondered just what I expected.

Once inside, I was pleasantly surprised. It was in the bulletin that I would be available after the service to hear testimony. An usher showed me to my seat. I sat and watched the people come inside. They all greeted each other with warm handshakes and hugs. After they were all seated, a woman began to play the piano and a man the trumpet. In no time the congregation was singing hymns of praise.

As the service continued, the Bible was read, and Pastor Cairns delivered a sermon. He was very good. After that people came up the aisle to affirm their faith. One woman began speaking in tongues. It got quite emotional. People were weeping with tears of joy and praying in the spaces between the pews. It was contagious. A definite presence could be felt.



**"I was dead for four minutes,
maybe longer during the second attack.
I was gone and I came back."**

Baby Christian

Mr. Gosnell is a member of the Capital Assembly of God congregation. He considers himself a baby Christian and dates his personal conversion to a little over seven and a half years ago. His newly found faith was strengthened a year after his conversion by his narrow escape from death by heart attack.

FIP: Mr. Gosnell, in what way did you experience healing?

MR. GOSNELL: I've been healed in a way that can only happen through Jesus Christ. This has happened to me on several occasions. The first time, of course, was spiritual. You see, I'm just a baby Christian, and becoming a Christian has been just as much a miracle as the physical healings that I've been given.

Anyway, one night about seven and a half years ago, I was going through one of those times when you feel that no matter how hard you pray your prayers are just not reaching. You feel that way because Satan puts it into you. Well, that night, I got down on my knees and prayed. I said, "Lord, if you are real, let me know if I belong to you or not."

That night I had a dream. I dreamed I was standing in a big open field. In the dream it was dusk-dark. I turned to the left of me and saw a man wearing a cloak. And then, I looked straight ahead and saw a man who looked just like me. He was my double. All of a sudden the man in the cloak took out a gun and shot my double. The next thing you know I was going down a stairway into a basement with the man in the cloak. In the basement I saw my double tied up to the ceiling and bleeding from his side. I wanted to cut him down and take him to a hospital, but he was dead.

FIP: What did this dream mean to you?

MR. GOSNELL: The next day an interpretation came to me in a flash. The old John Gosnell was dead, and the new John Gosnell lived for Jesus. I knew I belonged to Him.

FIP: What is the difference between the old John Gosnell and the new John Gosnell?

MR. GOSNELL: After that dream, I still used to curse a lot. I cursed, smoked — everything! I also drank. I drank regular. I consumed much more than my system would throw off. So, one day, I just said, "Lord, deliver me from it." He did and there's not a curse word that will come to my mind. I can't even remember the jokes that I used to tell. He cut off my drinking and smoking too. I truly am a new man.

FIP: What about physical healing? How were you healed of a physical ailment?

MR. GOSNELL: A year from the time I was just telling you about, I had a massive heart attack. My wife took me to the hospital, in the afternoon, about three o'clock. I was having a heart attack in the car. By the time I got to the hospital, I was all right. I was sweating a little bit. I didn't have any chest pains — nothing like that. The cardiograms seemed all right, but the doctors decided to put me in the hospital anyway.

That night I had two cardiac arrests. I was dead for four minutes, maybe longer, during the second attack. I was gone and I came back. After I came back they put a pacemaker on me. My heart was just bouncing all around, you know. A day later, my second day in the hospital, I told the doctors to take the pacemaker off.

The doctors were shocked when they examined me. They could not understand why the strength of my heart was increasing so rapidly. I told them why. I said, "Jesus Christ has healed me, that's why."

The doctor told my wife, before I got out of the hospital, that I may have suffered some brain damage, because my heart stopped longer than three minutes. It was way over three minutes — maybe four or five. They simply couldn't understand why this was happening. When I kept telling them about it, I think that they began to believe.

They, the doctors and nurses, were curious about what I saw when I was under. They all asked me what I saw, if anything.

FIP: What did you see?

MR. GOSNELL: I saw a big light up ahead. That's all I saw — just a big light. It's just a miracle that I'm here today to tell about it.

You know, when you're healed by the Lord, you're really healed. The doctor put me on a diet. On that diet I went down in weight from one hundred fifty pounds to one hundred thirty pounds. I finally told my wife that I was going to eat like I always eat. I started eating regular and all the weight came back. Four months later I went to the doctor for a checkup. I told him what I did. He said that what I did was right. I haven't had any problems with my heart since. I never worry about it. I don't even think about it. The only medicine I take is one little pill every day.

More than that, every time I go to the hospital my cholesterol is perfect, my blood sugar is perfect, and all my other tests are perfect. I asked my doctor whether another doctor who didn't know me would ever be able to tell that I had heart trouble. He said, "No way!"

FIP: Were people praying for you while you were in the hospital?

MR. GOSNELL: Oh yes. This group of brothers and sisters are wonderful. You know I might say to somebody that I'm sick, and he might say, "John, I'll pray for you." Then later, if he remembers, he'll say, "Lord, please help John to get well." That's like spitting in the ocean. But this body of people here prays sincerely and from the heart. Boy, I'm telling you this is the best. I've been to a lot of churches in my life, but this is the only church that I've ever been to where I've ever actually felt the presence of the Lord. We've got two preachers who tell it like it's really supposed to be told. Just what the Word says.

FIP: Can anyone be healed by the Lord?

MR. GOSNELL: I believe that many people can be healed by the Lord, if they would just accept it. But many do not accept it. They always have that doubt.

FIP: Did you experience any doubt when you were healed?

MR. GOSNELL: When I was in that hospital, I had no doubt whatsoever. I believed with all my heart. And most important, after I was healed, I believed that I was really healed. That's the reason I don't have to keep running back and forth to a doctor. I know that Jesus Christ healed me. I know that it's been for real. And it has been for feal! There's over seven year's proof. The Lord is good!

FIP: Do you pray now as much as you did then?

MR. GOSNELL: I pray and pray, but I need to learn to pray even better. I have to know in my heart that my prayers are heard by the Lord. You know, Satan keeps trying to put those doubts in there. He hates for you to pray. He just hates it. But I keep trying. I know that all I have to do is ask the Lord to open my heart and give me the words that I'm trying to say. The Lord is good.

**"The Lord never condemns you.
You just need to share with somebody,
and say, 'Hey, I'm hurting'"**

Mrs. Cairns

Mrs. Cairns, Pastor Cairns' wife has won struggles with a variety of severe health problems, including a severe kidney problem and lupus. Her story is miraculous, not only because of the physical healings she received, but also for the courage she displayed in admitting her hurts, both physical and emotional, to people who sometimes couldn't believe that it was possible for the wife of a pastor to suffer.

MRS. CAIRNS: I've experienced several healings from the Lord. I guess that the only place for me to start is at the beginning, when my first son was born. Anyway, at the birth of our first son, I had a very bad kidney problem. It was so bad that I went into convulsions right after he was born.

FIP: Was this caused by some kind of infection?

MRS. CAIRNS: Yes. That's where it came from, I guess. But besides that, I had these seizures. My son was born at home. There, I had so many of these seizures that I lapsed into a coma. I was rushed immediately to a hospital

where I kept having more seizures. All of this, of course, is very hazy to me, because I was out totally. I mainly rely on what I've been told by others about what happened during this period. I don't remember the birth of my son, Tom, or any of what I'm now telling you.

I continued to have so many seizures and convulsions that people began preparing for my death. My family was told that if I had one more, that would be it. But, I did not have another seizure.

FIP: Were people praying for you?

"All these persons died in faith. They were not yet in possession of the things promised, but had seen them far ahead and hailed them, and confessed themselves no more than strangers or passing travellers on the earth."

Hebrews 11:13 *The New English Bible*

MRS. CAIRNS: Yes. My family was praying and others too. I'm sure that the Lord heard their prayers.

"All these persons died in faith. They were not yet in possession of the things promised, but had seen them far ahead and hailed them, and confessed themselves no more than strangers or passing travellers on the earth."

Hebrews 11:13 *The New English Bible*

Anyway, I went into another coma for three and a half days. When I came out of it, I was still very ill. I needed transfusions to help, and I remained in the hospital for about eighteen days.

Finally they released me. I still had trouble with my kidneys. The doctor told me that I was not to get pregnant again. But, within about nine or ten months, I did get pregnant. The infection was still in my kidneys when I went back to the doctor's. Needless to say, I was very upset. I cried.

Three doctors said that I would have to terminate the pregnancy. Every week he was testing me. At almost three months he said, "Get through the holidays and then you will have a legal abortion."

Just after that happened, we went to see William Caldwell. He's a friend of ours, an evangelist, who holds these special meetings. He didn't know of my problem. My husband and I went to one of his special meetings. At the meeting, the Lord gave him a knowledge that someone had a condition in their

body and that God was healing it at that particular time.

FIP: I assume that you were the person being healed?

MRS. CAIRNS: Yes. I sat there, realizing that the Lord was ministering to me. But I didn't raise my hand as Mr. Caldwell had wanted. Several other people responded by raising their hands. He said, "No. I definitely feel, and it's from God, that someone is being healed who has a very bad kidney condition."

As he spoke, the Spirit of the Lord came over me with such a warmth and flooding in my spirit that I didn't make any response at all.

FIP: You didn't tell those present that it was you who was being healed?

MRS. CAIRNS: No. I was sitting three-quarters of the way back in this congregation. I felt so full. He asked again for the person to stand. I still would not stand.

Later my husband asked me why I didn't stand. He said, "I really know that it was you, so why didn't you stand and witness?"

I said, "It was me. We're going to a doctor, and when the doctor confirms my healing, then we will tell Bill. But I know I was healed beyond a shadow of a doubt." I just felt if there were limbs or eyes or anything that the congregation could see, I would stand up. It would be better to have it all confirmed by a doctor."

We went back to the doctor. He tested me. The results of the tests shocked him. He said, "I don't know what happened, but whatever it is, if you remain like this you can carry your baby and go through your pregnancy." Well, thank God, I did.

When my second son was born, the nurses all came down to my room to see me. They just couldn't believe that I could go through a normal delivery without any problems.

FIP: Have you ever had your kidneys tested since your second son was born?

MRS. CAIRNS: Two years after my second son was born, I had an appendectomy. It was an emergency operation. While I was in the hospital, my doctor decided to test my kidneys once again. Later, after the operation, he told me, "I can't believe you. I thought for sure that you only had one working kidney. They are both perfect and they are working just fine." And to this day I've never had any problems with my kidneys. I've had other problems, but not with my kidneys."

FIP: Were there other healings in your life?

MRS. CAIRNS: Since then I've had a back problem, surgery, lupus, steroid treatments, and cataracts. Of course, the cataracts come from the steroids

which are necessary for treating lupus. For the past three years I've been checked for lupus and there's not a trace.

FIP: Did prayer have anything to do with your recovery from lupus?

MRS. CAIRNS: Oh yes!

Here's what happened. Several years ago, I had a back problem, and I had to get back surgery which was quite extensive. The surgery was done in a hospital in Philadelphia.

When I was recuperating from the surgery, the doctor told me to get into the sun because it would be good for my recovery. I did as I was told. Well, about four or five months after the surgery, I started to get very ill. I seemed to be going backwards. Here I am in the sun and my spinal cord was getting ready to rupture.

I know that the Lord heals in miraculous ways. Anyway, they took me back into the hospital and put me through thirty days of testing. They finally sent a special blood culture to the Mayo Clinic. When this culture came back, there were strains of lupus in it. They then started me on steroids. This was back in 1973. I didn't want to take them. They said it was either that or my life. There was no other treatment. I also had to get more back surgery, because there were adhesions building up on my back nerves. I wasn't able to move.

FIP: Mrs. Cairns, you certainly do not look like a woman who went through what you went through.

MRS. CAIRNS: I know. The Lord has just ministered to me throughout all my sickness. But I'll tell you. It was touch and go for awhile. I was down to a hundred and two pounds. Now, of course, I'm back to worrying about what I eat.

When it all was happening, I was trying all I could to trust God, and at the same time I was frustrated as a pastor's wife. Because I would wonder, well, people are praying — am I disappointing them? You know, because we really believe in divine healing.

One evening I was in my room and the Scripture came to me — that it was more important when we're sick and hurting that the Enemy not be allowed to rob us of our faith. The comfort I got was from the eleventh chapter of Hebrews where it says, "All these, how much they did by faith, and there were those who died in the faith." I said, "Lord, no matter what, I know you're with me." It's more important that we keep the faith.

It was a struggle. At the hospital there was this doctor who swore at all his patients. He wasn't my doctor, but he had to do a liver biopsy on me. He was so nasty that I wouldn't let him near me. I told my doctor to keep him away from me. I told him that I knew I looked ugly on the outside, because I was wasting away. I told him I could accept that. But I was beginning to feel ugly on the inside. I didn't want that to happen.

The hardest thing I've found is to let the Lord work in my life and not be

upset. I was disappointed in myself. As a Christian, I never felt it would come to me. And it isn't always popular to be honest and tell that to people. I realize that when you're going through hard times, you most of all need someone who will just listen. The Lord never condemns you. You just need to share with somebody, and say, "Hey, I'm hurting."

FIP: Was your healing more than a physical healing?

MRS. CAIRNS: Oh definitely. When I look back now, I really get scared of how deep I had gotten into depression. I didn't know I was depressed at the time. I had to get honest with myself to get out of the depression. I found out that when people are going through hard times in their life, they have to be honest about it. Other people can help by allowing people to be honest about how they really feel. We all want so much to be over the trials and hard places that we sometimes have trouble expressing our needs. You know, in the Bible, they didn't play games. The man that had leprosy didn't try to fool anybody that this was his need.

It's like we come and want prayer and maybe we're afraid to admit it. We think that people will think that we have no faith. So we couch our words or are careful in some other fashion. We're still presenting our needs, we think, but expressing faith when we do it. It puts us in areas where the Lord doesn't intend us to go. But we do, or we allow others, who are well meaning, to do it for us.

FIP: How did you get out of this bind?

MRS. CAIRNS: I had a friend Pamela. I could just call her and weep. She would just be there, listening. She didn't condemn me. Just knowing that I could be open with her made everything so much better. She would never tell me that I'm supposed to have all this faith and all that. I knew she was there, but I was still ashamed to reach out. Now, I'm glad I did. After all, the Lord said that we need one another. It wasn't so bad after I did it.

FIP: How are you now?

MRS. CAIRNS: In areas, I'm not as movable as I was before all this happened. But, you know, I'm not like I was, and I thank God for that.

FIP: Do you still take steroids?

MRS. CAIRNS: No.

FIP: How old is your second son, now?

MRS. CAIRNS: He's thirty-two and he sat behind me in church tonight. It's a thrill when I go back and think about it all. Praise God.

Mary Baker Eddy — founder of Christian Science

A Christian Science practitioner explains the healing process of Christian Science.

Christian Science

Mrs. Wagenseil is a practitioner of Christian Science. In this interview, she explains her faith in Christian Science and how its practice can heal the sick.

FIP: How does Christian Science differ from other Christian faiths?

MRS. WAGENSEIL: Actually, we have a lot in common with other Christian churches. And we do have some differences. We worship God and pattern our lives after the teachings of the Bible. In Sunday School, our children are taught the Ten Commandments, the Sermon on the Mount, and the Lord's Prayer. They are also taught how to make these teachings practical in their daily lives.

Our services are quite simple. Our pastor is the Bible and *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* by Mary Baker Eddy. We have no rites in our church such as baptism and communion. These we see as a daily activity: praying and communing with God and trying daily to purify our thoughts and actions.

Christianity, for the most part, believes that Jesus is God. We don't. Christian Science teaches that Jesus was human. The Christ, his divine title, was his spiritual nature or identity — his conscience being as God's image and likeness. His whole life was a living example of his understanding of his relationship to God — his Sonship.

FIP: It seems that you are telling me that Christ is an idea.

MRS. WAGENSEIL: Yes — a divine idea. Jesus, in his teachings, was always acknowledging God as his Father. Christian Science teaches that God is the Father of all — the one creator. It also teaches that God is Spirit. This means that man, God's likeness, is spiritual. It takes consecrated humble prayer to be free from the belief in an anthropomorphic God.

FIP: A man with a beard?

MRS. WAGENSEIL: Yes. Christian Science teaches the all-presence and all-power of God, Spirit — the God who is Love and the Principle of all that is real.

FIP: Is it correct that Christian Science believes disease to be an illusion?

MRS. WAGENSEIL: It depends on how you define illusion. Webster defines illusion as "the state of being intellectually misled." With that definition of illusion, we could call disease an illusion. Now, to the person who is ill, and perhaps suffering, disease seems very real.

However, it can be healed through prayer when it is seen as an illusion — a state of being intellectually misled. If the thought of the patient is changed through prayer, he is healed. Actually, the healing process is a matter of re-education. The patient is educated to better understand God, who has not created disease or sin. The healing process also helped him to understand his own spiritual nature. Man's spiritual nature is not referred to very often, and yet this is what needs to be recognized.

FIP: Can this apply to a serious illness? Say leprosy?

MRS. WAGENSEIL: Jesus healed leprosy. Shouldn't we be able to? Don't we have the same God he did — the same truth?

FIP: Isn't there a reality to this disease called leprosy?

MRS. WAGENSEIL: Now we're talking about what's real and what's not real. We're talking about concepts. To the person who has leprosy, it's very real. To the Christian Science practitioner it's unreal, in that he knows it's not of God. As a practitioner, if someone told me he had leprosy, and I believed in the reality of leprosy, I couldn't heal it. I would recognize what the patient believes, but I would also recognize it as an illusion — that the patient has been mentally misled. He has been educated into seeing himself as a mortal who is subject to sickness and disease. Christian Science treatment reverses that. We start by praying. We pray with God who is good and created all good. We start with man as His likeness — spiritual and perfect.

Of course, there is a lot more to Christian Science treatment than that.

I've been a Christian Scientist for over thirty years and I still think of treatment in new and inspired ways every day.

FIP: If disease is an illusion, does that mean that our physical body is also an illusion?

MRS. WAGENSEIL: It is a mental concept. We have been educated into believing that it is physical. Our real body is our spiritual identity: the spiritual qualities we embody. That's very different from the physical body.

FIP: How about sin? Does Christian Science have a concept of sin?

MRS. WAGENSEIL: Well, we do and we do not believe in sin. If God saw everything he made and it was good, and if God's eyes are too pure to behold sin, then we can say there is no reality to sin. This is what it says in the Bible. But in his human experience, man does have to cope with sin. We don't ignore sin. We know it can be healed. It can be more readily healed if we truly see and accept man's sinless nature as God's likeness.

Mrs. Eddy defines sin as the belief that there is life, substance, and intelligence in matter. You might say the basic sin is believing that there is a power apart from God or that man is separated from God.

FIP: Christian Science seems very intellectual. Can just anyone understand Christian Science without being intellectually inclined?

MRS. WAGENSEIL: One of Mrs. Eddy's first students was a shoemaker. In *Science and Health* Mrs. Eddy writes, "The time for thinkers has come." This is a challenge today. Very few people have the time or inclination to think. Now, anyone can understand Christian Science, but it does take some thinking. Truth is basically simple. As you begin to study the Bible and the Christian Science textbook, you become educated. First you become educated spiritually, but also in very practical ways. I remember reading of an illiterate woman in Italy who learned to read by attending Christian Science Church services, listening, and then struggling to read the Bible and the Christian Science textbook.

FIP: OK. Let's go back to healing. Say for example, I came to you, a Christian Science practitioner, with an ulcer — what would you do?

MRS. WAGENSEIL: First we would talk about God and your relationship to Him.

FIP: Would I have to be a Christian Scientist to come to you about my ulcer?

MRS. WAGENSEIL: No.

New Christian Science Center, Boston Mass.

FIP: Say this person with an ulcer eats a lot of spicy food. Could he be healed and continue to eat spicy food?

MRS. WAGENSEIL: He could be healed. If he wanted to, he could eat spicy food. On the other hand, he might find that his desire for spicy food lessens. I want to mention that we neither diagnose nor give advice. A Christian Science practitioner prays. And the prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

FIP: It seems that Christian Science deals with two levels of reality: the level of our common human experience and the level of Science. Does anyone ever shed the first level completely?

MRS. WAGENSEIL: Jesus did. If we would completely shed the human, we would ascend. But don't worry. I think we have a long way to go before that happens.

FIP: How do you ask God to relieve sickness?

MRS. WAGENSEIL: We don't ask God. To us that would be like asking a principle of mathematics to work out a problem for you. There is something we have to do. Prayer, as Mrs. Eddy defines it in *Science and Health*, is "deep and conscientious protests of Truth." Prayer is an affirmation of what is true. A patient can start there in his praying. Sometimes this involves some arguing. Mrs. Eddy likens it to a lawyer pleading a case. You argue, so to speak, on the side of truth. Jesus said, "Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free."

FIP: What are you arguing with?

MRS. WAGENSEIL: Some of your beliefs about yourself and also the mortal or general beliefs attached to mankind. Treatment is both general and specific. The specific in the case of an ulcer would be to pray to know that what mankind believes about ulcers, the causes, consequences, is not the reality of being. We speak of how thought governs the body. A good example is fear. We've all been afraid at one time or another. You can remember what happened to your body when you were afraid — a sure sign that thoughts do affect our body.

FIP: Is eliminating fear a part of Christian Science treatment?

MRS. WAGENSEIL: Yes it is. If we can heal the fear, the disease will disappear.

FIP: How does Christian Science deal with fear?

MRS. WAGENSEIL: Through prayer. And also, by getting to know God

better. A verse from Job gives us good counsel. "Acquaint now thyself with him (God) and be at peace." It's really that basic, but acquainting yourself with God is the work of eternity. There is nothing more satisfying and more spiritually stimulating than to do this.

FIP: When you first came to Christian Science, did you have a physical problem?

MRS. WAGENSEIL: No. I found out about Christian Science and it interested me. I was not unhappy. I was not ill. The logic of it appealed to me. Although I had no physical problems when I became a Christian Scientist, I have since had many healings. I've seen instantaneous healings in my family.

FIP: Could you be specific?

MRS. WAGENSEIL: I could tell you of many healings. One of our boys came home from playing football with his friends. He stepped into a hole and twisted his knee. He came to the door with a look of anguish on his face. At that moment I remembered a couple of sentences I heard at a Christian Science lecture. The words had stayed with me. I said to my son, with conviction, "Substance is as solid as Principle and as flexible as mind; it cannot be broken at the whim of mortal mind, but it can be bent at the will of divine Mind." That was the end of his problem. He never again mentioned it, and he was walking freely.

FIP: In the course of our conversation it has occurred to me that from all you've told me about Christian Science belief, it would follow that the more we explore the material world, the more calamities we bring on ourselves. Do you follow me?

MRS. WAGENSEIL: Yes I do. But by the same token, the more we explore the spiritual universe, the fewer calamities we will have. It goes back to acquainting ourselves with God.

FIP: Can one look at broader issues, like social problems, from a Christian Science perspective?

MRS. WAGENSEIL: Oh absolutely. *The Christian Science Monitor,* our daily international newspaper, helps us to be aware of current social issues and other world conditions. Our prayers embrace all mankind. You can be sure that much prayerful work is done about the problems confronting us today, and these problems seem to be numerous.

FIP: Does Christian Science believe in life after death?

MRS. WAGENSEIL: We believe that man's consciousness, or life, because it

is of God, never ends.

FIP: What is health to a Christian Scientist?

MRS. WAGENSEIL: It is not primarily a condition of matter — it is a condition of Mind, God. Health, wholeness, and holiness are all the same — and a holy man would mean a whole or healthy man. If health is a condition of Mind, then man must include this health, for he is the image of God.

"Truth has no beginning. The divine Mind is the Soul of man, and gives man dominion over things. Man was not created from a material basis, nor bidden to obey material laws which spirit never made; his province is in spiritual statutes, in the higher law of Mind."

Mary Baker Eddy
Science and Health

" . . . over a million alcoholics are staying sober with the aid of this spiritual program of recovery."

A.A.

Alcoholics Anonymous is made up of men and women who together recover from the fatal disease of alcoholism. In the book Alcoholics Anonymous, *known to A.A.'s as the "Big Book," the prospective member is told, "Remember that we deal with alcohol — cunning, baffling, powerful! Without help it is too much for us. But there is One who has all power — that One is God. May you find Him now!"*

Since 1935, Alcoholics Anonymous has, by spiritual means, been able to keep alcoholics sober. Before the days of A.A. there was little chance of recovery from this fatal disease. Few were helped by psychology, religion, and the medical profession. Alcoholics Anonymous took from each of these areas what it needed. The principles of the program embodied in The Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous *were the result of trial and error of the first members of A.A. Now forty-eight years later over a million alcoholics are staying sober with the aid of this spiritual program of recovery.*

"I broke out into a cold sweat and cried out into the night, "Oh God, I don't want to die!"

A Mother's Prayer

B.D. is a young man whose drinking and use of drugs took him to the depths of mental illness and despair. B.D. are initials which he chose for this interview. His name will not be published in keeping with Alcoholics Anonymous' traditions of personal anonymity.

Throughout his addictions, B.D.'s mother called in prayers to a prayer tower in Tulsa, Oklahoma. B.D. believes his mother's prayers played a crucial role in his recovery from alcoholism and drug addiction. Now B.D. is a member of Alcoholics Anonymous in Trenton, New Jersey. He regularly attends A.A. meetings and tries to practice the spiritual principles of this program in all his affairs. He is a happy man now and very grateful to his mother, God, and particularly the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous.

FIP: How long have you been a member of Alcoholics Anonymous?

B.D.: I've been sober for four and a half years. If you knew my case or me before I sobered up, you would know that I am a walking miracle. You see, in 1977 doctors were preparing my family for the fact that I might have to be permanently institutionalized. I spent six months out of that year in a mental institution.

FIP: How did you get in that state?

B.D.: Through the use and abuse of alcohol and drugs.

FIP: Did this happen all at once?

B.D.: No. It all began innocently enough. As an adolescent I was shy and rather inhibited. I couldn't talk with ease, especially to members of the opposite sex. I daydreamed a lot about great things that I would do with my life, and yet I was so uptight with my situation at the time. I had the character of an alcoholic before I ever picked up a drink. I felt different. I thought that I didn't fit in, and yet I would try to convince myself that I was somewhat better than other people. Life seemed somehow strained and I escaped in my fantasies.

At the age of thirteen I got drunk for the first time. My brother and I were at my grandfather's house. No one was home, so we broke into his liquor cabinet. We drank a pint of his Apple Jack brandy and some of his wine. Almost instantly I fell in love — in love with alcohol. I felt that the strain of life had been lifted. I got so silly that I couldn't stop laughing, even after my parents found out. Of course, I was obviously drunk. My grandfather called and I was grounded. I always hated to be grounded, but for some mysterious reason it seemed worth it this time.

Anyway, I continued to drink when I could. By the time I was fifteen years old, I was drinking every weekend. All week I would wait till Friday night so that I could drink wine or beer with my friends. We would go to the high school dances half-loaded. I thought I was bigger than life when I drank. I had enough courage to ask girls to dance and I seemed to have more friends than I ever had before.

I was only sixteen when I first got into any trouble because of my drinking. I was fired from my summer job in a fast-food restaurant. A friend of mine who was a lifeguard and myself would meet at my house every morning and drink liquor from my father's bar in the basement. As soon as we were good and high, we would each go to our jobs. One morning I came to work so drunk that I stepped into a bucket of paint, got into an argument with the boss, and was fired.

I graduated from high school in 1967. I was in the bottom half of my class. I somehow managed to get accepted into a small midwestern college. I was frightened that I would flunk out of school before I even got there. When I did get there, I studied very hard. I got good grades and I drank on the weekend as a reward for my hard work. I left my first year of school with a high enough grade-point average to transfer to a school in New Jersey.

While I was back in New Jersey, I met a girl. We were an odd couple. She was rather depressive and I thought, by this time, that I was one of the world's leading intellectuals. It seems like we each had a role to perform in what was a mutually dependent relationship. I was to make her happy and she was to keep me straight and take an interest in my studies. Two years after meeting, we got married.

When I left college, I got accepted to graduate school.

FIP: Were you still drinking every weekend?

B.D.: Probably. By then I was beginning to drink during the week too. Anyway here I was, married, and I thought on my way to intellectual fame.

My first week of classes threatened my fragile ego. I met lots of other students who also thought they were geniuses. All of a sudden I thought that I couldn't do it. I wanted to run, but I couldn't admit to anyone my feelings. Pride kept me in check.

I continued to go to classes. I became so nervous that my hands shook when I spoke. I felt that old feeling that life was strained. My home situation was no better. My new wife and I were already fighting. We had to leave our apartment and live with my parents. My wife began to resent me going to school, and I wanted out of everything.

I found a solution. I went to a psychiatrist, a woman. She was easy. I got what I wanted. She gave me a written letter to give to the school so that I could be excused from my classes for a year without losing my academic standing. She also prescribed various pills to relieve, what she termed, an anxiety neurosis. She recommended that I get a job so that I would feel useful, and I took her advice. I got a job in a liquor store. This is the point where my alcoholism became chronic. I drank every day at work. I was allowed to drink as much beer as I wanted, but that wasn't enough. I sampled everything and I was drunk by noon every day. I was also taking the pills. Besides that, around this time I started smoking pot. So every day I drank, took pills, and smoked pot. This went on even after I was fired from the liquor store for drinking wine on the job.

I was beginning to feel better emotionally. I went back to school, and I continued with my addictions. At first I did very well in grad school, but eventually I started to skip classes and take incomplete grades rather than finish my term papers. I got into a crowd of druggies and began to experiment with all sorts of drugs, all the while still drinking, smoking pot, and taking pills. Two and a half years later I went home from school one day and simply didn't come back.

I felt guilty and was loaded with self-pity. I became a recluse. I wouldn't leave my room except to go to the liquor store or if a friend of mine brought over some pot. I continued to see the psychiatrist. She began to worry about the extent of my depression. I finally made my first visit to the mental hospital in December 1974. At the hospital they tried to get me out of my depression with antidepressants and talk therapy, but they didn't seem to work. Finally, they tried shock treatments. I don't know how many they gave me, but for a while they seemed to take the edge off of my depression. I was released. Six months later I was back to receive another series of shock treatments. This was happening while my wife was pregnant.

Not long after my second stay at the hospital, my first son was born. I was drunk the day my wife delivered, and almost didn't get her to the hospital. I thought to myself that this boy could supply the meaning my life seemed to lack. Having a son, I thought, would straighten me out.

FIP: I suppose it didn't.

B.D.: No, it didn't. At the time, I was employed at a fast-food restaurant. I

worked out this deal with my wife. I suggested that since she had a steady employment record and I didn't, that it might be best that I take care of my son and she continue working. She consented and I became a househusband. That was really something.

FIP: So she went for the idea?

B.D.: I just want to say that alcoholism is a family disease. The alcoholic affects his or her family so much that often their thinking is colored by the alcoholic's warped sense of reality.

My wife went for the idea. She enjoyed her job and didn't really want to give it up. Also, she reasoned, it might be just the thing to get me back on my feet. I convinced her that my bouts with mental illness were behind me. They weren't my fault, anyway. It was all those phonies in the academic world. After a year of raising my son, I would be ready to enter the work world.

The first week of being a househusband, I was perfect. The house was immaculately clean. The baby was fed on time. I changed his diapers and so on. It didn't last that way for long. We had just moved into a new house. I began to complain that cleaning such a big house was too big a chore for me. My wife was not sympathetic. She felt that it was part of the deal and that was that. I rebelled against the situation. The dishes began to pile up. The laundry was rarely done, and in no time the house was a mess. My wife reluctantly began doing the household chores. I still tended the baby. I resented it terribly.

FIP: You were drinking at this time?

B.D.: Around the clock. I was burning dinners. Often while my son took his nap, I would run to the liquor store to get something to drink. My friends would come over to the house and smoke pot with me. Once I had a bad lung infection and was prescribed codeine cough syrup. I liked it so much that I went to several doctors for the same prescription. I was at a drug store every day refilling my prescription of cough syrup. My life was totally out of control.

My wife and I fought so much that the house was always full of tension. She didn't like me smoking as much pot as I did, so I began to hide it all over the house. I stole from the family till, our savings account, and I even wrote checks from the bottom of the checkbook to get my drugs.

My friends began to worry about me. They were all like me but not quite as far gone. I often annoyed them with late night phone calls which I wouldn't remember the next day. I was becoming a blackout drinker.

FIP: What's that?

B.D.: Memory lapses. I would drink and have lapses of memory. People would have to tell me the things which I did the night before. Sometimes people would be angry with me, and I wouldn't know why. One time I embarrassed my wife at a social function with her coworkers. I started a fight in a blackout.

Later, I couldn't understand why everyone was mad at me.

Waking up with my son became a drag. I hated the sound of him crying, and yet I felt guilty about feeling that way. I was always tired. I usually had to drink 'til I passed out and that was usually late at night. I went through a phase of saying I was sick. I complained of back pains. I went to a doctor who prescribed valium and told me not to lift anything over ten pounds. I got my way. Now I had an excuse for not taking care of my son. We sent him to my mother-in-law's house during the day and at night my wife took care of him.

FIP: Did you get a job?

B.D.: Plenty of them. In 1976 I must have worked in at least twenty different jobs. I was very good at getting a job, but I had a hard time keeping a job. Usually I quit for this or that reason. The truth was I wanted to keep on using drugs and drinking. I even started to experiment with LSD. I was living in such a fog by this time that I have little memory of 1976. I vaguely remember the Bicentennial. I know that I spent that particular evening in a bar.

I never was much of a bar drinker, but I began to go to bars at night to get away from my wife. My rationalization was that I needed a break from what I termed "deadening routine." Actually my drinking was the only routine I had. Drinking alcoholically was boring. Life seemed grey and passed by without my noticing. Every day was the same.

FIP: How did it stop?

B.D.: I had to suffer a lot more. Sometime in 1977 my wife was pregnant again. I was, at the time, rapidly getting crazy. I often became obnoxious. People stopped coming over to visit me. I had alienated everyone. I even began to become disrespectful to my parents — something I never had been before.

One day I completely flipped out. I thought the end of the world was coming near. I heard on the radio something about a nuclear war beginning in China. Of course, no one else heard these reports. On that day I decided that I was going to do something about the condition of the world. I rode to New Brunswick to visit the graduate school. I was a political science major, so I went to the political science department to criticize the neglect of the world by intellectuals. I was sure they were not doing their jobs and keeping the peace.

I was absolutely nuts. I stormed into a meeting that they were having and began to rant and rave. After I left their office, I tried to enlist into the army to get my family out of the States so that they would have a better chance of surviving a nuclear holocaust. The army recruiter called me "insane." I left his office and started for home. I got on the New Jersey Turnpike and was convinced that an evacuation of the East Coast was in progress. Everyone was driving south on the turnpike. Of course, it was rush hour and all the commuters were going home.

I can remember riding through the toll gate without paying my toll. I thought the toll collector was a helper in the evacuation. I pondered how brave

he was to stay behind while we were all leaving. I waved to him as I drove by. The end result of all this was that I got committed to a private mental hospital. For the first week that I was there I didn't know where I was. They diagnosed me as a manic-depressive with a touch of schizophrenia. My family was braced for the fact that I might become institutionalized for life — probably in halfway houses. My mother would not accept the verdict.

FIP: What did she do?

B.D.: She prayed. She would call the prayer tower at Oral Roberts University every day and pray that my problems would be resolved. I believe that I am sitting here today because of the prayers of a loving mother.

FIP: Is this when you found A.A.?

B.D.: No. In three months I was out of the hospital. I was told to take lithium for my manic depression. I did for a while, but I stopped when I found out that I got sick to my stomach after mixing beer and lithium. I resented being committed, and I continued to drink.

After being out of the hospital for about a week, I started to go to bars again and I was seldom home. For a time I never ran into my wife. The one time that I did, I was drunk. We had a fight which led me to tearing up the house. I nearly destroyed all the furniture, and when I was finished, I beat her up. That was something totally new. I never hit her before, but my drunken rage was uncontrollable.

The police came and carted me away. I was committed again. This time to a state hospital. It was an awful place from what I can remember. Often I was beaten by the guards and locked in solitary. Finally I got out. They let me go back to the private hospital. I stayed there for two to three months on a locked ward.

At the end of my stay a doctor told me that even though my commitment was over, I should consider spending time on the addiction recovery unit. I refused. He then told me that if I continued to drink and use drugs, I would be back. I half believed him. My mother was still praying for me. She even set up a job for me at a company for which she worked.

At first I took the doctor's warning seriously. I stayed away from a drink for four months. It was amazing. I got promoted on the job. Friends and family seemed happy, and my mother suspected that her prayers were answered. But after I stayed dry for four months, I figured that I couldn't possibly be an alcoholic, so I picked up a drink.

My drinking pattern at this point changed. I was beginning to get physically sick from alcohol. I would have severe gastritis attacks, and I would go into blackouts with just the slightest amount of alcohol. I was losing my tolerance for alcohol. Also, I was constantly fatigued. I shook in the morning and sometimes I could barely shave. My solution to this dilemma was to find another drug to keep me going. I started to use amphetamines — speed.

I started to spend tremendous amounts of money on speed. Its stimulant effect allowed me to drink continuously without tiring. I rapidly lost weight. I found myself going up and down using speed to keep me awake and alcohol to put me out.

One night in the late summer of 1978 I was lying in bed half asleep. I saw this light. I was in this light, and I saw myself as I never did before. I looked decrepit, and I thought I was going to die. I broke into a cold sweat and cried out into the night, "Oh God, I don't want to die!" I fell asleep. The next morning I checked myself into an alcoholic rehabilitation center. My mother's prayers were answered. The grace of God entered my life.

FIP: Is this where you found A.A.?

B.D.: This is where I was first exposed to A.A. We were driven around to A.A. meetings on buses. I was very foggy and don't remember my first A.A. meetings. I was full of reservations, and at this point, I planned to leave my wife. Of course, the feeling was mutual. I checked out of the rehab early before my stay was actually up. I lived with my brother for a week and then I found my own apartment. I went to a few A.A. meetings.

I decided that I could get away with smoking a little pot, so I did. That led me to taking a drink. I quickly found out that it's the first drink that gets you drunk. After I picked up a drink, I couldn't stop. I drank all night. I felt guilty. I knew what I was doing, but there was no stopping me. Here I was drunk and wanting more. I drove back to the rehab and checked myself in. This time I was ready. I surrendered to reality. I did what they told me. I left when they suggested.

Now I love A.A. I couldn't wait for the bus to take us to the meetings. I started to read the A.A. literature and work the simple program of recovery.

After I got out of the rehab I continued to go to A.A. I joined several A.A. groups. I admitted that I was powerless over alcohol and that I couldn't beat this disease with unaided willpower. I learned to pray. Every morning I would wake up and ask God to keep me sober another day, and every day I would share my experience, strength, and hope with other alcoholics. I learned to base my life on honesty and helping others. And I found a power greater than myself at those meetings — a power that could do for me what I could not do for myself. I choose to call that power God.

FIP: Did you get back together with your wife?

B.D.: No. We divorced. I got remarried to a woman in A.A. Our relationship is beautiful and we are very much in love without the sick dependency that characterized my first marriage.

FIP: I guess this means that you are cured.

B.D.: No it doesn't. Alcoholism is an incurable disease. I stay away from one

drink, one day at a time, through the strength I get in Alcoholics Anonymous, and the grace of God. It's been four and a half years now. It is a wonderful life. I can be the father I want to be to my children. I am happily married. I am employable, and most of all I no longer have to drink and take drugs.

FIP: Do you pray often?

B.D.: Prayer has become a way of life for me now. I only ask for sobriety and to know what God's will is for me. And every night I thank that power that has kept me sober. Of course, that's not all there is to it. I try to carry A.A.'s message to the still suffering alcoholic. I speak at meetings. I cart around new people in the fellowship who don't have rides, and I try to the best of my ability to grow along spiritual lines.

FIP: Does your mother still pray for you?

B.D.: I'm sure she does. I'm very grateful to my mother for her prayers. I don't think my life would have turned out as it has without them.

FIP: When will you stop going to the meetings?

B.D.: The day after I die. The meetings keep me sober. That is where I feel the grace of God.

Serenity Prayer

God grant me the serenity
to accept the things I cannot change,
courage to change the things I can,
and wisdom to know the difference.

The Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God, *as we understood Him.*
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God *as we understood Him,* praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

"I was in absolute panic and for some reason, instead of going out to borrow money, I called the number on the meeting list."

Wife, Nurse, Alcoholic

Alcoholism is no respecter of class, race, creed, or sex. G.D., a nurse and middle-aged married woman, would seem like the most unlikely person to be an alcoholic. Yet, at one point this relatively small woman had to drink a quart of vodka a day to feed her addiction to alcohol.

Right from the beginning of the movement, women began to trickle into A.A. At first only a few came; then as time went on their membership increased. Now some A.A.'s believe that nearly half the membership of Alcoholics Anonymous is composed of women.

Along with the development of A.A., another program began to develop. This program, Al-Anon, started with the spouses of the original A.A.'s. It has now developed into a fellowship for those affected by an alcoholic in their lives. Like A.A., Al-Anon uses The Twelve Steps of Recovery.

In G.D.'s case history, her husband found Al-Anon and learned to detach from her alcoholic problem. Left alone with her addiction, G.D. finally sought help for her alcoholic problem. Now she and her husband both practice a spiritual way of life.

FIP: How long have you been attending A.A. meetings?

G.D.: I've been in the program for six months.

FIP: Are there many women in A.A.?

G.D.: I think the membership is equal in terms of men and women.

FIP: Do you see yourself as a miracle?

G.D.: Yes I do. Before I got to Alcoholics Anonymous, I was drinking close to a quart of vodka per day. I had to drink and I hated myself. I thought I would never be able to stop. Of course, at one time I thought I could control my drinking. You know, I would only drink after a certain time. I would nurse my drinks. I would switch brands. Sometimes I would even try to abstain. It never worked. I always ended up drunk.

FIP: How did you get to A.A.?

G.D.: I am a nurse. My drinking was beginning to cause trouble for me on the job. I stopped working full time because I couldn't handle the job and the drinking every day. I ended up just working weekends. I brought a bottle to work with me and by sipping I could get through the weekend. During the week I would binge.

At about the same time that I became part-time at the hospital, my husband joined Al-Anon.

FIP: What's that?

G.D. Al-Anon is a sister program to A.A. It is for people who live with or are close to an alcoholic.

Anyway, at Al-Anon my husband learned that by being married to an alcoholic he was becoming sick. His main project in life, up until then was trying to control my drinking. He learned to detach with love — something which completely baffled me. He was learning to live according to spiritual principles, and he was leaving me alone about my drinking.

At first I liked it. I was free to do what I wanted. The only hitch was that he was also free — free of my influence. He didn't worry about jams I got myself into or whether I was sick or not. He learned that he was powerless over my alcoholism. He also learned how to be free from my pushing his buttons.

FIP: What do you mean by that?

G.D.: It almost became impossible for me to start arguments with him. I had fewer and fewer excuses for my drinking. I would go into rages and no one cared. No one jumped.

Now this was an ongoing thing. My drinking got worse and my husband's disposition seemed to get better. I knew that he had found something that was helping him. When he first joined Al-Anon, he gave me some A.A. literature. I argued that I was not an alcoholic — that I had problems, but they had to do with my job and the fact that nobody appreciated me. Who wouldn't drink under those circumstances. He never brought up the subject again.

One day I grew curious about the literature. I went to the kitchen drawer where I tucked the pamplets away and read the literature. It didn't thrill me. I threw out all the brochures, except one. I don't know why I kept that particular pamplet, but I did. It was a local meeting list.

Since I was working only weekends, my drinking money began to get low. Sometimes, at the end of the week I found myself going over to friends' houses to borrow money or just with the hope that they would offer me a drink. One morning I woke up without a drop in the house and I was shaking horribly. I had no money and I didn't know where I would get the next drink from. I was in an absolute panic and for some reason, instead of going out to borrow money, I called the number on the meeting list.

When I called, an answering service picked up the phone. I told the operator that I needed help and she put me on hold. Finally she gave me a phone number to call.

FIP: You called then.

G.D.: Yes. A woman answered the phone. I told her that I needed a drink, was very sick, and didn't know what to do. She asked for my address and told me she would be right over. An hour later she arrived with another woman. They sat with me for hours. The woman I called told me her life story. I identified with everything she said. I felt that I could make it if these women stayed with me long enough.

There was a noontime meeting that day and these two wonderful women asked me to come with them. I said yes, but I was frightened. We went to the meeting. As soon as I entered the room, I felt at home. That's hard to explain, but that is how I felt. I've been going to A.A. meetings ever since that day. The woman I called is now my sponsor. I can call her any time of the day or night. I love the program and I love being sober.

FIP: Do you pray to stay sober?

G.D.: Yes. Everyday I ask God to keep me sober and each night I thank him for another day of sobriety. My other problems seem to be taking care of themselves. My husband and I work our own programs and we now have this spiritual bond that has totally renewed our marriage. We actually feel like newlyweds.

THE FELLOWSHIP'S NEW DIRECTIONS

At a recent Meeting of the Trustees of Fellowship in Prayer, it was decided to give a new emphasis to the program of the Fellowship after the December 1983 issue of the publication appears. The basic publication program will then shift to making grants to writers, artists, and photographers for short book-length projects, and to cooperating financially with other publishers as regards publication.

Concurrently, a new effort will be made to reach out with the spoken word to groups concerned with prayer and meditation throughout the country.

After the December 1983 issue, the monthly publication will become an eight-page quarterly news report on prayer among all religious groups throughout the world, to be circulated gratis among all friends of Fellowship in Prayer. All present subscribers will be reimbursed for the unexpired portion of their current subscriptions and kept on the mailing list.

The Trustees hope that the new program will increase the effectiveness of the Fellowship's work and reflect the excellence of our late editor Paul Griffith's vision. Current friends and subscribers will be of central importance to the program.

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